

Idaho Public Utilities Commission

Case No. INC-T-13-01, Order No. 32938

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Wireless company granted conditional ETC status in hopes of serving Idaho tribes

The Idaho Public Utilities Commission granted Inland Cellular conditional expansion of its service territory, allowing the company to participate in an auction that could accelerate deployment of cellular and broadband services on tribal lands.

The commission granted Inland conditional expansion of its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) status. ETC status qualifies telecommunications carriers to receive federal support to help consumers in areas where it costs more to provide a telecommunications network.

Expanded ETC status for Inland is conditioned on the company winning support from the Federal Communication Commission's Tribal Mobility Fund auction to be held soon. Money awarded as a result of the auction will provide one-time support to carriers that commit to provide 3G or better mobile voice and broadband services to tribal lands that have been identified by the FCC as lacking such services. Inland submitted a copy of its application to the Coeur d'Alene and Nez Perce tribes of Idaho.

In November 2011, the FCC created the Connect America Fund, which reforms the Universal Service Fund. The USF was created in 1997 to promote universal telephone service at reasonable cost in rural areas. The Connect America Fund was created to transition the communication infrastructure to a modern network that supports high-speed Internet access in rural areas.

Idaho residential customers pay 16 cents per month per residential line and business customers 25 cents per month into USF. There is also a charge of six-tenths of 1 cent per long-distance minute to support the fund.

Inland Cellular, headquartered in Roslyn, Washington, is authorized to do business in Idaho.

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